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SUBJECT: NATIONAL DIALOGUE MINISTER ON RECONCILIATION PLANS

REF: BAGHDAD 2203

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a June 27 meeting with PolCouns and RDML Van Buskirk, new Minister of State for National Dialogue Dr. Akram al-Hakim outlined his plans. According to al-Hakim, resolving de-Ba'athification and the militias would be the biggest challenges for implementing the National Reconciliation Plan. Al-Hakim said that he wants to include the Iraqi diaspora in the reconciliation process. In a separate meeting on the same day, National Security Advisor Mowafaq Rubaie told Charge d'Affaires Speckhard that al-Hakim was designated by the Prime Minister as lead for managing the national reconciliation initiative, although Rubaie acknowledged that his office might not have the capacity yet.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Minister of State for National Dialogue al-Hakim met on June 27 with PolCouns and RDML Van Buskirk to review al-Hakim's plans for his newly formed ministry. Al-Hakim said that his priorities in this position are: to spread the culture of dialogue and communication that has weakened after years of tyranny; to negotiate local agreements to mitigate the risk of civil war; and to support the Prime Minister's National Reconciliation Plan (reftel). He asked for training and technical assistance as he stands up his new ministry. Al-Hakim also met with UNAMI Representative Ashraf Qazi on June 27 and was promised UN support for his ministry.

¶3. (C) A Shia associated with SCIRI, al-Hakim said that he has the trust of his community and that he would try to allay concerns that national reconciliation would lead to a return of the former regime. Key to maintaining that trust, al-Hakim recommended, will be getting the support of religious and tribal leaders in ensuring that the people named to the Higher Commission on National Reconciliation will be acceptable. The process must lead to a reduction in violence, he added, and the Sunnis must understand that "we are not trying to exclude them, just the terrorists among them."

¶4. (C) According to al-Hakim, dealing with Ba'athists will be one of the most difficult issues to handle, since it provokes fears of their return among Iraqis. Turning to the issue of militias, al-Hakim said that people fear that the security forces will not be balanced. There are huge gaps in the security services, which the militias fill, he concluded. The Prime Minister is serious about taking weapons away from non-governmental forces, but that will take some time, al-Hakim concluded.

¶5. (C) Dr. al-Hakim outlined his desire to engage the Iraqi diaspora in Cairo, Amman, Damascus, and the Emirates. The diaspora are against the GOI, al-Hakim said, and they need to be convinced to support it. He was dismissive of the Arab

League (AL) reconciliation conference and suggested that it will not occur in August as planned. He said that he has not yet been invited to the AL's July preparatory meetings in Cairo. Some people want the conference to be held outside of Baghdad, al-Hakim said, adding that he read in the media that the AL does not want the GOI to be present.

16. (C) BIO NOTE: Dr. Akram al-Hakim has a background in agriculture. He was a professor of plant protection/insect control at the University of Baghdad until he left Iraq. Since 1994, he has lived in London and been involved in opposition politics, working with Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and Ahmad Chalabi. Most of his family continues to reside in London. END BIO NOTE.
Khalilzad